

Graces Notes

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Dramatic

Setting: The kitchen of a farmhouse. December 1966.

Scene: Emily is holding a book but staring into space. Catherine and Grace are in the middle of an argument. Catherine has just revealed that she is pregnant.

Grace: 53, speaks her mind, traces remaining of a South Carolina childhood, genteel, a beauty.
Emily: 16, her daughter.

Catherine: 19, her old daughter.

Molly: 33, her step-daughter, very pregnant.

GRACE: Don't start, Catherine. We have to talk about the future. What to do afterwards. *(Deep breath.)* I can't think straight. Lord, how am I going to get dinner ready?

EMILY: Who gives a damn about dinner?

GRACE: I do! Okay. It's Thursday night. We're going to have a nice quiet meal for a change. The Wards are coming over for cards later. Tomorrow your father will be home. And on Monday, after everyone's left, Joseph and you and I are going to sit down and have a long talk.

CATHERINE: Sure. We can talk about it all you want. I've made my decision.

GRACE: Nobody's making any decisions right now. Not me, not you. This is too emotional.

CATHERINE: I'm not emotional, Mama. I'm perfectly calm. I've had a long time to think about this.

GRACE: Fine, now I'm entitled to the same courtesy. I don't want either of you to say a word about this tonight. In fact, nobody is to know until after Christmas. Is that clear?

EMILY: Sure, but why not?

GRACE: Because we're going to have a nice, family holiday. I don't want anything to ruin it.

CATHERINE: *(Mutters.)* What bullshit.

GRACE: Catherine? Promise me. No big scenes. *(Pause.)* Don't you think your father deserves to be told next?

LETICIA: Oh, we're jus' gonna hang out for a while.
HORTENSIA: Well, not on the street, do you hear me?

LETICIA: Aw, mom!

HORTENSIA: Aw, Mom!

ROSARIO: Déjala, Tencha.

HORTENSIA: Pero, no la conoces, es callejera.

LETICIA: Shoot, I'll be graduating in a month.

HORTENSIA: You think graduating makes you una mujer. Eres mujer cuando te cases. Then your husband can worry about you, not me.

LETICIA: Yeah, but Rigo can come and go as he pleases whether he's married or not.

HORTENSIA: Claro. Es hombre.

LETICIA: Es hombre. Es hombre. I'm sick of hearing that. It's not fair.

HORTENSIA: Well, you better get use to things not being fair.

Whoever said the world was goin' to be fair?

LETICIA: Well, my world's going to be fair! *(Leticia exits upstage.)*

Rosario and Hortensia stare at the air in silence.)

HORTENSIA: Te digo, the girl scares me sometimes.

LUPE: *(Entering.)* Papi wants his cigarettes. *(They turn to her. A beat.)*

Then all three simultaneously turn their attention back to the novela.

The lights fade to black while the novela continues playing in the darkness.)

CATHERINE: Sure, Mama.
GRACE: Nobody says a word till Monday. Agreed? Emily?
EMILY: I promise.
CATHERINE: Okay. No big scenes.
GRACE: Fine. Who wants to help me with the pies?
EMILY: I don't really feel like it.
CATHERINE: I think I'll go lie down for a while.
GRACE: Catherine? Have you been taking care of yourself?
CATHERINE: Sure. I'm fine, Mama. Just tired, that's all.
GRACE: Eating all right?
CATHERINE: Yes, I said!
EMILY: You want help with your bags?
CATHERINE: Sure. Thanks.
(*They grab the bags and exit. Grace pours herself a drink, sits at the table, and lights a cigarette. Molly enters from the outside.*)
MOLLY: Whew, it's really nippy out there! (*Shrugs out of her coat.*)
GRACE: Here, sit down. I'll take that. (*Hangs up Molly's coat. Molly is hugely pregnant.*) Enjoy your walk?
MOLLY: It was wonderful! I'd forgotten how beautiful the trees look when they get covered in snow. In Washington, everything just melts right away. It's been warm so far this winter.
GRACE: Not up here.
MOLLY: I can see that! Abby and Annie. . . ?
GRACE: Last time I checked, they were fast asleep.
MOLLY: Wonderful. (*Grimaces.*) Oh, boy. Sometimes I think this one is twins again. He's so strong. Cath get in all right?
GRACE: I suppose.
MOLLY: Martinis in the afternoon? This looks serious.
GRACE: My funny daughter. (*Pause.*) I was just trying to relax a little.
MOLLY: Grace? Is something wrong?
GRACE: Not a thing. I'm just preoccupied. (*Forcing a smile.*) I've got so much to do.
MOLLY: I could help if you'd let me.
GRACE: No, you won't. One of the main reasons for having you all up here this year is so you wouldn't have to lift a finger. And I meant that. Besides, Emily's a great help to me.
MOLLY: Sure, when she thinks about it. And Cath. . . (*Really looking at her.*) You look kind of drawn out. Are you getting enough sleep?

GRACE: I should be asking you that. (*Gets up.*) Would you like some hot chocolate?
MOLLY: I'd love some! I miss your hot chocolate more than just about anything else on the farm.
GRACE: Flattery will get you everywhere. (*Gets down two mugs.*) I think I'll join you.
MOLLY: Are you sure you're feeling all right?
GRACE: Molly, let it go. I'm fine.
MOLLY: Okay, okay. At least let me make the sweet potatoes?
GRACE: Nope. You can help next year.
MOLLY: With three kids hanging on me? It'll be a miracle if I get anything done.
GRACE: You love it though.
MOLLY: This one's going to be a boy. I just know it. (*Unable to take anymore, Grace begins to cry.*) Grace? What is it? (*Gets up and embraces Grace.*) I knew something was wrong.
GRACE: No. . . (*Grace tries to compose herself. Catherine bursts in.*)
CATHERINE: I'm going to the store. You need anything else?
GRACE: Oh. . . no, I don't think so. I thought you were tired.
MOLLY: Why don't you slow down for a second? Can't you see she's upset?
CATHERINE: Mind your own damn business, Molly! (*To Grace.*) I see you couldn't keep quiet for ten minutes.
MOLLY: Keep quiet about what?
GRACE: Catherine, calm down.
CATHERINE: No, I won't calm down! God, you're such a hypocrite!
GRACE: Catherine. . .
CATHERINE: You said we'd keep this quiet till after Christmas! But the minute I get out of the room, you blab to her! Thanks a lot, Mom.
MOLLY: What are you talking about?
CATHERINE: Come off it, Molly. Don't pretend she didn't tell you I'm pregnant!
MOLLY: (*Stunned.*) You're what?
CATHERINE: Some secret, Mom. Thanks a lot.
GRACE: Actually, I didn't tell her.
CATHERINE: Sure. Then what was all that about when I came in? You crying, your precious Molly hugging you. . .
GRACE: I needed a little comfort, that's all! But I didn't tell her why I was upset, Catherine.

CATHERINE: Yeah, right.
 MOLLY: She's telling the truth. You just told me yourself. (*Awkward silence.*)
 CATHERINE: Oh, man. . . I gotta get out of here for a while. Where's the car keys?
 GRACE: Where are the car keys? (*Catherine just glares at her.*) Here. (*Hands them to her.*)
 CATHERINE: Do you have a couple of bucks? (*Grace hands her some money.*) Thanks. See ya. (*Grabs her coat and slams out.*)
 GRACE: (*Trying to joke.*) Car keys, money. . . if I closed my eyes and her voice was a little lower, I'd think Jason was here.
 MOLLY: Grace. . . I'm sorry.
 GRACE: You didn't do anything wrong, honey. (*Getting tearful again.*) I don't know what to do. How did this happen? I'm scared for her Molly. I'm so scared.
 EMILY: Cath! Wait for me! (*Emily bursts in, runs to kitchen door, and stands looking out.*)
 MOLLY: She's going to be all right, Mom. Catherine's a survivor. Like you were.
 GRACE: I wish I felt that way.
 EMILY: She never waits for me! (*Suddenly starts crying.*) She's always running on ahead.
 GRACE: It's okay, honey. It's okay. Shh. She just needs some time to herself, that's all. Shh. Everything's going to be fine.
 (*Grace hugs Emily tight, nearly crying herself. Molly looks on. Lights fade.*)

Seventeen Warnings in Search of a Feminist Poem

Erica Jong

Reader's Theater Piece/Poetry

4 Women

- 1: Beware of the man who denounces ambition;
his fingers itch under his gloves.
- 2: Beware of the man who denounces war
through clenched teeth.
- 3: Beware of the man who denounces women writers;
his penis is tiny and he cannot spell.
- 4: Beware of the man who wants to protect you;
he will protect you from everything but
himself.
- 5: Beware of the man who loves to cook;
he will fill your kitchen with greasy pots.
- 6: Beware of the man who loves your soul;
he is a bullshitter.
- 7: Beware of the man who denounces his mother;
he is a son of a bitch.
- 8: Beware of the man who spells son of a bitch as one word;
he is a hack.
- 9: Beware of the man who loves death too well;
he is taking out insurance.
- 10: Beware of the man who loves life too well;
he is a fool.
- 11: Beware of the man who denounces psychiatrists;
he is afraid.
- 12: Beware of the man who trusts psychiatrists;
he is in hock.
- 13: Beware of the man who picks your dresses;
he wants to wear them.
- 14: Beware of the man you think is harmless;
he will surprise you.